

Opinion



Other Viewpoints

Give clear message on commissioners

We offer this editorial about events in Sherman County as food for thought for the Colby area, without taking one side or the other:

Citizens of Sherman County want an opportunity to vote on county commissioners at-large, and after the results of a mock election this month, it's time for the county commissioners to live up to their promise to let the people vote.

The effort to give the Sherman County citizens a chance to vote on the issue has been going on for more than two years. It nearly got through the Legislature this spring but mixed signals from two county commissioners made legislators think the people had not been informed or were against the change. They pulled the plug, and used the bill number to pass something entirely different.

In May, after the session ended in Topeka, County Commissioners Chuck Thomas and Mitch Tiede said they had "lots of people" tell them they did not want to change how the commissioners are elected from districts.

Thomas asked Trevor Linton, chairman of the Shine On Sherman County Government Alliance Committee, to hold some public forums and gather public opinion.

When the commissioners asked Linton and his committee to hold the forums, they said they would follow the wishes of the people.

The committee held a forum during the Northwest Kansas District Free Fair in August, and a booth was set up allowing people to vote on the issue.

Linton said the number of people voting then was pretty small, and the committee wanted to have another way to give people a chance to express their opinions.

The group held a mock election held at the Goodland Activity Center on election day. More than 400 people went to the mock-election poll, with nearly 80 percent saying they want to vote on the commissioners at-large.

"That is a turnout of about 11 percent of those registered," Linton said, "and 333 voted yes while 86 voted no. We were pleased with the turnout.

"The majority apparently want the chance to vote, but it will have to go back to the Legislature in Topeka in January."

We agree the people have spoken, and now is the time for the sitting commissioners to ask Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer and Rep. Jim Morrison to take the issue back to the Legislature.

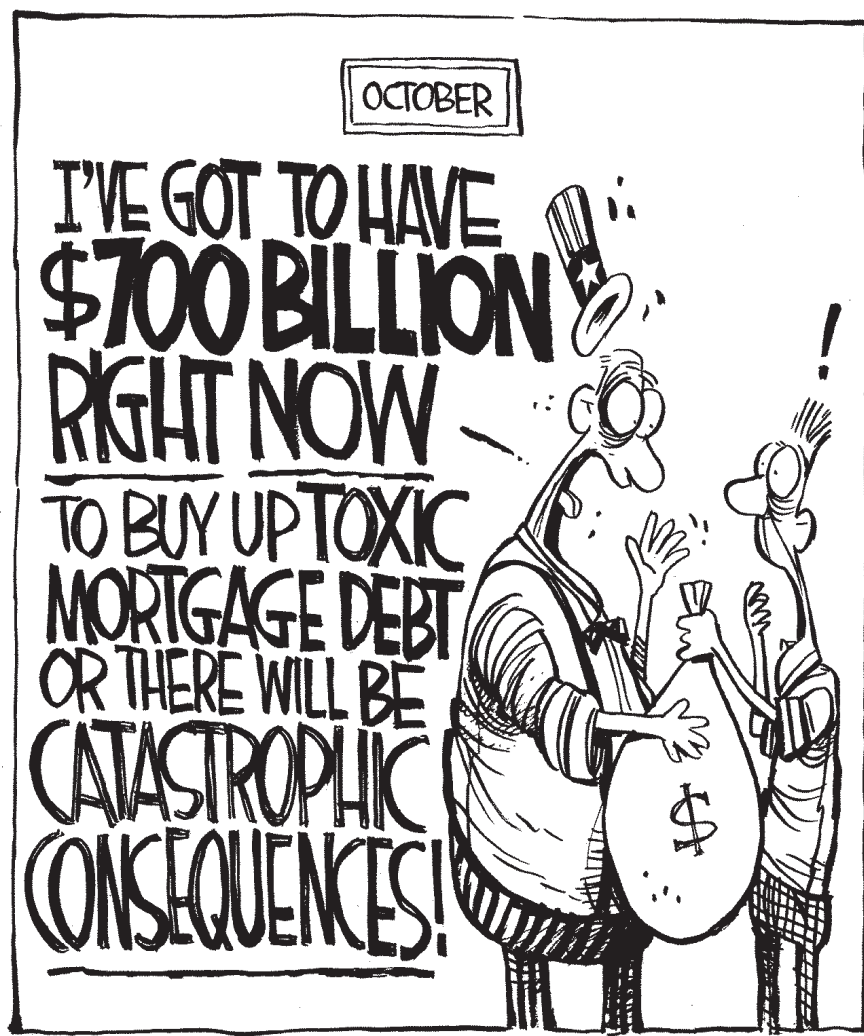
This time, the commissioners should support the bill without sending mixed signals, no matter whether they support the issue or not.

Once the bill gets through the Legislature, it will be put before the citizens to decide. Both sides of the question should present their case and let the people make the ultimate decision.

Commissioners Thomas and Tiede said they would follow the wishes of the citizens and Commissioner Kevin Rasure has said he was in favor of the bill all along.

We hope the commissioners stand up and do the right thing. They can push their personal views during the campaign.

— Tom Betz, *The Goodland Star-News*



Treasure the wide-open countryside

I'm typing this on a beautiful Sunday afternoon. The weather is perfect. Its not too cold or too windy, and that terrible realization that tomorrow is Monday has yet to fully sink in.

A small portion of my day has been spent driving around on dirt roads looking for hunters and farmers cutting milo. While I didn't get any great pictures, the drive was therapeutic.

I got to breathe the country air, sing James Taylor lyrics out of tune and experience that liberating feeling that comes from being away from civilization for a while.

Being a reporter, I don't get to spend all that much time away from noise. To put it simply, silence, peace and solitude are a pipe dream for a reporter.

Here at the *Colby Free Press*, the phone seems to ring every five seconds. During more mature moments, I grit my teeth and continue working, but during my weaker moments my language gets salty enough to make anyone's mother cringe. It is hard to couple my longing for solitude with my passion for writing for a newspaper.

There are times when I would rather be out fishing with a buddy on a lesser-known stream in Colorado, Montana or Kansas then being stuck having to listen to that phone ring all day. But such is life. I try not to forget that I like my job, which is something that I need to always be grateful for, if only to keep from becoming a chronic whiner.

One of the more disturbing trends I see occurring today is how young people are leaving their small towns to head toward the city. I don't begrudge anyone who decides to do this. There are a lot of great things to be found in a



Andy Heintz

• Wildcat Ramblings

big city.

The night life is better, and the city tends to be more racially and culturally diverse, which can help erase stereotypes. And if architects eventually start building cities centered around people instead of cars, I would certainly consider living in one — if I could afford it.

But there are many aspects of the city that are not as inviting. There's the bumper-to-bumper traffic, the poverty, the violence, the air pollution, the ghettos, the materialism and the homelessness.

There's also the fast pace city living. People are always moving at breakneck speed. Some are forced to move at this pace in order to put food on the table for their children. Others have been so hypnotized by the system that they are convinced that working countless hours away from their family is worth it if they can buy Johnny and Sandy new Porsches, knowing the Mustangs they have now are so yesterday.

I feel if we continue to let small towns go under, while urban sprawl continues to spread its tentacles further into the countryside, we will lose a part of the American culture that is irreplaceable. It would be tragic to allow what remains of our rural areas and countryside to be developed into miniature versions of New

York. This country sits on some of the most beautiful land in the entire world. The American landscape's diversity is what makes it so unusual. We live in a country inhabited by deserts, mountains, oceans, forests, large natural lakes, giant rivers and peaceful streams.

You can visit Hawaii and relax by the ocean, or head to certain places in Kansas or North Dakota where you can see land miles away with houses nowhere in sight.

I know some people will chuckle when I compare the landscape in Kansas to the landscape in Hawaii, but I think all land that has remained wild is beautiful in its own way. I feel sort of sorry for the people who only can get excited about nature when they are in Yosemite, Yellowstone or somewhere in Alaska. These are certainly breathtaking, and I still dream about visiting Alaska someday, but to only be able to see beauty in these places is a lot like only being happy when you land a trout over 20 pounds.

I truly believe if you look close enough, you will be able to see beauty in all places that haven't been urbanized. You might even be able to see the beauty in driving down a dirt road in northwest Kansas with nothing but crops and wide-open spaces to your left and right.

Andy Heintz, a K-State journalism graduate, is sports reporter for the Colby Free Press. He says he loves K-State athletics and fishing, sports and opinion writing.

Reader praises voice for handicapped

To the Editor:

I am writing this letter to thank you for putting the letter to the editor in the Nov. 12 *Colby Free Press* about wheelchairs on the streets. So here's my thanks to Jari Skiles for writing the letter.

I have written many letters to the editor on this subject over the past year and got no one to help me get this point across to the City of Colby and the Thomas County board to do something about it. I got no where with it, so maybe now this will open their eyes and they will listen to what the handicapped are saying to do about it instead of make excuses on not having the money.

There are grants out there for this reason, but yet they do not what to take the time to write for them. I know, because I have tried to get them to help me write them. Maybe they will listen to you on this subject, but don't hold you breath on it because I have tried for over a year now to get them to do something.

I just want to say thank you for caring about the disabled, because I am one of them who has tired to fight City Hall on this issue and could not get them to do a thing about it. I wish you the best of luck on this one.

If you need any help on this, you can call me at (785) 460-1970.

George Aumiller, Colby



Free Press Letter Drop

• Our readers sound off

Liberals will destroy us

To the Editor:

Good bye, America.

We've had it now. We have a president elect who is a big government, welfare state socialist with non-Christian origins, no leadership experience and a long-standing association with a terrorist and other people who hate our America.

He will be supported by a far-left Democrat Congress led by Sen. Harry Reid and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who despise capitalism and personal freedom more than they love our country.

He will also be constantly boosted by a lap-dog liberal media that has shamelessly promoted him since he graduated from ACORN. And, they all belong to the crowd that blames America for all the world's woes.

As soon as they all allow us to deteriorate to Third-World status, we will be easy prey for terrorists and aggressor nations.

To make our position even worse, the Re-

publicans in Washington have neither the interest or the guts to stand up to them. We need term limits now.

Hello, Amerika.

R.W. Yeager, Norton retired contractor

Where to write, call

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774

U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521

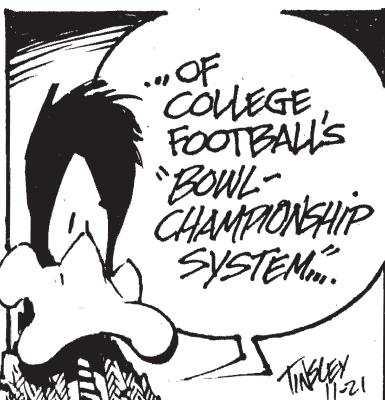
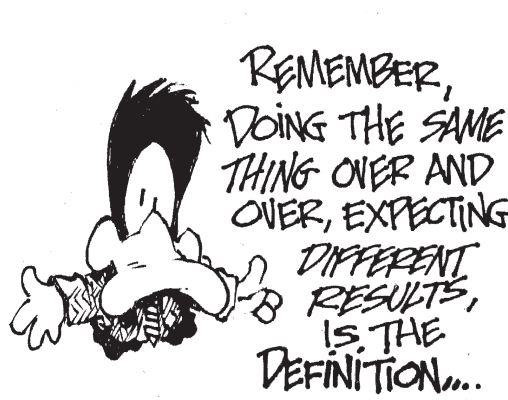
U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran, 2202 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124

State Rep. Jim Morrison, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St. Room 143-N, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7676 e-mail: jmorriso@ink.org

State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St., Room 128-S., Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7399 ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley



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